

Managing Scholar/Practitioner Tensions: A Study of Library and Information Science Faculty

Alexis Rittenberger

Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio USA

adr97@case.edu

ABSTRACT

Exploring faculty management of the tensions between academia and practice, this three-phase mixed methods study focuses on Library and Information Science (LIS) faculty. It utilizes qualitative, quantitative, and fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). Using an exploratory sequential design, the phases are intended to identify the ways faculty connect with practitioners, to measure the extent institutional pressures impact faculty inclusion in the practitioner community, and to determine the combination of factors that predict faculty integration of practice into teaching or research.

The findings indicate that LIS faculty maneuver institutional and cultural systems to manage the tensions between academia and practice. Faculty tap their intrinsic motivation, participate in boundary spanning activities, and recognize institutional expectations. We identify four integrated findings: 1) Faculty are determined to manage the tensions between academia and practice. 2) Faculty need diverse and adaptable solutions to manage the tensions between academia and practice. 3) Faculty participate in boundary spanning activities to integrate academia and practice. 4) Institutional expectations negatively impact the ability of tenure-track faculty from managing the tensions.

Influencing the sustainability of professional education, our findings can simplify the integration of practice into academia and help faculty more easily manage the tensions in ways beneficial to the university, the program, individual faculty, and the profession itself. This research contributes to the literature on the role of scholar-practitioners and the value of employee authenticity within institutions. Finally, we map the institutional effects on identity and reality using theoretical underpinnings from organizational institutionalism, social identity theory, and social constructionism.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Education programs/schools; Teaching faculty; Standards; Administration; Students.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Practitioner-scholar tensions; Professional programs; Program/Institutional sustainability; Mixed methods; Boundary spanning.